

VZCZCXRO6637
PP RUEHDBU
DE RUEHNT #0845/01 1171236
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 271236Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY TASHKENT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5653
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY 7853
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT 1939
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK 2466
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 2367
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 1444

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TASHKENT 000845

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/27/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [KISL](#) [UZ](#)
SUBJECT: THE LATEST FROM ANDIJON

REF: A. 05 TASHKENT 1527
[1](#)B. TASHKENT 809
[1](#)C. TASHKENT 515

Classified By: AMB. JON R. PURNELL FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: A local contact from Andijon reported a series of recent "worrying events" in and around the province. He said that the local government seems to be continuing to try to boost public morale but does not plan to officially commemorate the anniversary of the May 2005 violence. Six local women, having reportedly voiced frustration at not being granted the right to visit their husbands in prison, were arrested on possibly trumped-up charges of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) membership. In fact, the belief on the street is that government security services planted HT materials in order to silence the women. Finally, the contact said a state-sanctioned Imam at a local mosque encouraged men to leave Uzbekistan to seek work, saying religious authorities would take care of their families. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) A financial analyst from a local bank and Embassy contact conveyed his concerns about "worrying events" in Andijon following a recent visit. When asked about the upcoming anniversary of the May 2005 events, he said that some victims' families plan to lay flowers near a statue in the center of town, but that he had heard nothing of a GOU-sponsored ceremony. He had also heard that the Andijon province soccer team would soon return to their official stadium, located in the center of town near the hokimiyat (governor's office) and close to the square where the May disturbances took place. (Note: The hokimiyat was burned during last year's events. The government seems to be working hard to renovate the building and erase the visible scars of May 2005. End note.) The team has been prevented from playing in its own stadium for security reasons since May 2005 and was relocated to a small field on the edge of town. Residents believe that the GOU is using the return of the soccer team to boost the city's morale and distract the public during a time of remembrance and sorrow.

[1](#)3. (C) Our contact, who hails from Andijon province, also shared with Poloff the word on the street regarding the recent arrest of six women for possessing Hizb ut-Tahrir literature. The case of the six women appeared on Andijon television news on April 20. According to the report, the women are accused of promoting HT ideas and brought up on charges of "establishing, managing and joining religious, extremist, separatist, fundamentalist or other outlawed organizations." The women all hail from different towns in the Andijon region, and were listed by name in the report. They were accused of possessing hundreds of copies of HT

leaflets, books, brochures, tapes and discs. Interestingly, the report stated that the women continued their "illegal activities despite several warnings made by law enforcement agencies." (Comment: We find it highly unlikely that the GOU would "warn" someone known to be distributing HT material, as the Uzbeks consider HT an extremist organization. End comment.) According to our contact the women all have husbands in the Andijon City prison. Despite regulations that allow for monthly visits with prisoners, the women have only been allowed to see their husbands once in the last six months. On April 15, the women reportedly requested monthly visits through official channels. The belief on the street is that their public venting of concerns and frustrations about the restrictions led directly to their arrest. Rumor in Andijon has it that the National Security Service (NSS) and local police planted the HT documents in the homes of the accused in order to silence their criticism of the government. Our contact noted that this is a common police tactic and that the National Security Service (NSS) is widely suspected of producing its own versions of HT materials for the specific purpose of planting them on "troublemakers." (Note: In late May 2005, a religious official with the Uzbek government admitted to Poloff that the GOU authored an HT pamphlet for political reasons (ref. A). This method seems to be the easiest way to remove anyone willing to speak out against the GOU. End note.)

14. (C) During a visit to his home town of Marhamat, our contact attended Friday prayer at the local mosque and was shocked to hear the Imam, during his sermon, encourage the congregation to go to Russia, Kazakhstan or other neighboring countries in search of work. The Imam acknowledged the lack of employment opportunities in the

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province, and even went as far as to offer assistance to relatives left behind. Our contact said that one concern that keeps some from migrating in search of work is the fear that no one will arrange the proper burial for their elderly parents should they die. The Imam vowed to bury family members who pass away, should the main breadwinner be out of the country working. Our contact said his own village was made up mostly of women, children and the elderly due to the mass emigration of able-bodied males.

15. (C) Comment: While Post recognizes that these reports are based on the accounts of one individual, they reflect the general tension in the province that we have witnessed first hand. While the detention of these six women fits the government pattern of detaining anyone causing a disturbance or "threatening" stability, it also adds unneeded pressure to an already tense situation on the eve of the first anniversary of Andijon. Based on our contact's comments and conversations with residents of Andijon, it is evident that the people have little faith in their government. Public perception seems to be that these recent arrests are merely one more example of government misuse of power. We are not surprised to hear that the GOU plans no official memorial on the anniversary, but do expect increased security presence in the city. Unemployment and underemployment continue to plague the Ferghana Valley. In fact, in a recent meeting with a Deputy Minister of Labor and Social Protection, he acknowledged that the government had tasked his ministry with increasing employment opportunities in the impoverished Valley. The government directly benefits from labor migration, especially from the Valley, as it brings in much needed cash in the form of remittances, and gets young men, who might otherwise cause problems, off the streets and out of the country. This is the first time, however, that we have heard a state-sanctioned Imam encouraging men to leave the country in search of work.

PURNELL